

## “The Martha in the Kitchen of our Hearts” - Luke 10:38-42 – December 18<sup>th</sup>, 2011

- Romans chapter six... will not be our text today. The reason being that the Lord has re-directed me to another passage for today's teaching.
- Lest you find yourself disappointed having anticipated starting a new chapter in Romans, let me hasten to say, that we will resume it next year.
- I didn't want to begin a new series in a new chapter on the Sunday before Christmas and New Years both of which fall on a Sunday this year.

- Instead, the Lord has led me to Luke's gospel the 10<sup>th</sup> chapter, verses 38-42, which was our Bible study at the recent women's luncheon.
- When a number of women approached me about wanting copies of this teaching, I decided to pray about doing it on a Sunday morning as well.
- After inquiring of the Lord, my sense was that the Holy Spirit had a timely message for all of us during this hectic and hurried Christmas season.

- If I could be candid for just a moment, what ultimately confirmed this for me was the work that God was doing in me in teaching on this passage.
- The fact of the matter is, the Holy Spirit has convicted me personally, as it relates to the busy-ness of my own life as the pastor of this church.
- As the ladies already know this study of these two sisters, Mary and Martha, is a fountain of truth in how it speaks to our relationship with Jesus.

**Luke 10:38-42 NIV** As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. (39) She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said. (40) But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!" (41) "Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset about many things, (42) but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her."

- Before we dig into this, I think I'd be grossly remiss were I not to draw your attention to the stark and striking contrast between these two sisters.

MARTHA	MARY
Chose to serve	Chose to sit
Stood on her feet for Jesus	Sat at the feet of Jesus
Valued the physical food	Valued the spiritual food
Was worried and upset	Was quiet and peaceful
Had a rebuke toward Jesus	Was defended by Jesus
Was distracted in the work for Jesus	Was listening to the words of Jesus
Was busied by many things	Was blessed by only one thing
Needed to do what she wanted	Wanted to do what she needed

- There's a reason that Luke, in addition to how opposite they are, records for us these interesting details, and they could easily be missed at first.
- The first detail jumps out, and it's one for which I really need to point out, because it is going to be germane to our understanding of the account.
- Notice what and how Martha says this to Jesus; "Lord, don't you care that my sister has **left me** to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!"

- I can't help but wonder just how tense this would have become! Martha rebukes her Lord for not caring, and accuses her sister of not helping.
- Also, it's important to note how that Martha's communication isn't to Mary directly rather her confrontation is to Jesus bluntly. She is really mad.
- By the way, parenthetically let me say, that this is one of three times that we see Mary in the Gospels, and all three times she's at Jesus' feet.

- Picking a title was hard. It was either; "Martha's in the kitchen causing problems," or "Someone's in the Kitchen with Martha and its Not Mary."
- So, I decided on neither one and went with; "The Martha in the Kitchen of our Hearts," subtitled; "She's causing the Problems in my Busy Life."
- What I'd like to do is share with you seven problems that I was able to identify from the text that we have before us. Perhaps you can find more.

### 1. Martha's will over commit

- It's important to understand there's absolutely nothing wrong with being committed that's not our problem. Our problem is being over committed.
- I would suggest that Martha has done just that in anticipation of Jesus Himself coming to her home. She was already in way over her head.
- Her over commitment started when she started her "list." Again, there's nothing wrong having a list, the problems start when that list has you!

In her book, "Martha to the Max," Debi Stack writes about a most humorous story she cleverly titles, "Mary and Martha Attend a Women's Retreat in Ten Simple Steps." It goes like this:

Step 1	Mary receives brochure. Likes the pretty colors. Thinks the women pictured look like they'll be fun to talk to.	Martha receives brochure. Circles typographical errors.
Step 2	Mary calls friends and convinces them all to go as a group and share a room.	Martha reads qualifications of speakers to see if they're worth the cost.
Step 3	Mary checks her calendar and discovers she's supposed to be at the "Church Clean up Day" instead. Calls the coordinator to back out, but feels really, truly, awfully bad about it (for at least fifteen seconds).	Martha as coordinator, receives calls from several women backing out of Church Clean up Day. Spends two hours on the phone finding replacements.
Step 4	Mary registers for retreat by phone, hoping as she reads her charge card number aloud that she hasn't exceeded the credit limit. Exhilarated from accomplishing so much in one day, gathers an assortment of snacks and board games to take along.	Martha, using the internet, prints out a map showing the quickest route to the retreat, plus a description of its typical climate during that season. After studying the list of activities on the brochure, makes a list of wardrobe choices (with coordinated accessories) to fit every change in temperature or humidity. Double checks cosmetics suitcases, which is routinely stocked with travel-sized toiletries and her medical information typed neatly on an index card. After balancing her checkbook to the penny, she completes and mails her registration, paying extra for a private room.

Step 5	Mary arrives with her friends late at the retreat because during each of their frequent pit tops, they bought little gifts for loved ones at home, chatted in the bathrooms, and took goofy pictures of each other as if they were all teenagers again.	Martha arrives, alone, at the retreat right on time, proud to have completed her church obligations before she left on her nonstop, record-setting road trip.
Step 6	Mary stays up late that night playing games and swapping stories with her roommates. Before she falls asleep, resets her alarm clock for an hour later, having decided she can skip shampooing her hair and just wear her Mickey Mouse ball cap the next day instead.	Martha stays up late that night keying and cross-referencing notes from the speaker's workshops into her laptop. Checks and rechecks her alarm clock to make sure she has enough time in the morning to be properly costumed and coifed before anyone sees her.
Step 7	Mary sleeps deeply and well all night.	Martha has trouble falling asleep; mind races with reminders of how she must wake up early.
Step 8	Mary sees Martha across the table at breakfast, furrows her brow, and thinks, That woman is so uptight... I wonder if I should buy more cheesy-doodles for the trip home?	Martha sees Mary across the table at breakfast, arches her brow, and thinks, That woman is admiring me, but I wouldn't be caught in public looking like her unless I'd just had major surgery.
Step 9	Mary shares with her class at church the next Sunday what a wonderful time of fellowship was had by all at the retreat and how she can't wait for the next one.	Martha apologizes to her class at church the next Sunday that she did not have time to prepare a Power-Point presentation and humbly offers instead crisp photocopies of her transcribed notes from the retreat for those who couldn't attend (Or, she thinks to herself while looking at Mary, for those who were there but didn't pay attention).
Step 10	Mary, as usual, is among the last to leave the church because she spends so much time talking with people afterwards. Before she goes, she takes a quiet moment to sit alone in the sanctuary. There, she meditates on God's love for her and how He expressed it by refreshing her spirit at the retreat and deepening her friendships with other women.	Martha, as usual, is among the last to leave the church because as the coordinator of several ministries, she always finds urgent paperwork in her church mailbox. Before she leaves, she sits alone in the church office to update her personal planner with details for upcoming committee meetings. Feeling that familiar tight anxiety in her stomach, Martha concludes that the women's retreat failed to "refresh and restore" her as its brochure promised. Since demanding a refund wouldn't be the Christian thing to do, she decides to coordinate a better retreat herself and jots a note to the pastor telling him the date she has selected for it.

## **2. Martha's want to impress**

- In all fairness to Martha, you really can't blame her for wanting to impress her Lord, however, Martha's problem is that she can't impress Him.
- I'm not the sharpest knife in Martha's kitchen drawer, but it doesn't take a rocket scientist to know my secret recipe can't impress the creator.
- We, like Martha, seek to impress God, instead of being like Mary and simply bless God! Martha isn't impressing Him, but Mary is blessing Him.

## **3. Martha's long for approval**

- I'm of the belief that Martha is hoping Jesus will tell her how wonderful and delicious everything is. She needs Him to applaud and approve her.
- There are a couple of reasons I believe this, the first of which is that she tells Jesus to have Mary help her. This is her meal and this is her deal.
- The second reason I believe this is because her longing for approval comes out in her expecting Jesus to say that she's right and Mary's wrong.

## **4. Martha's argue over nothing**

- I can't get over, what all of this is over, food! This whole argument started with Martha losing perspective, blowing everything out of proportion.
- You'll know that you're doing this when you find yourself giving unnecessary attention, to necessary projects. It will become disproportionate.
- So much so, that we end up valuing the project over other people, and this is that which will usually lead to having conflict with other people.

## **5. Martha's are distracted by everything**

- I find it interesting how Jesus goes right to the heart of the matter by telling Martha she's distracted by all the preparations that had to be made.
- Martha's problem wasn't her preparations; her problem was that her preparations had become distractions, and distractions are very dangerous.
- It's for this reason that Martha is thinking her sister Mary needs to be in the kitchen with her instead of her being with Mary at the feet of Jesus.

## **6. Martha's sacrifice what's important**

- This is textbook. What I mean by that is that Martha has sacrificed the important on the altar of the urgent. This is just what Martha's will do.
- That's the only thing that fits, it's the only thing that makes sense when Jesus says that Mary's choice was better and could not be taken away.
- Here's what I'm thinking; "The Martha of urgency will always take away the Mary of importance, from that which lasts forever, for what won't."

## **7. Martha's cannot say no**

- While Martha's cannot say no, Mary's can, and this Mary did when she left Martha and chose to sit at Jesus' feet. This is the detail I mentioned.
- If you really think about it, in order for the Mary in us to say; "yes" to the one thing, Jesus, that Mary must say; "no" to the many things, Martha.
- You've got to know that Mary knows that saying no will certainly displease her sister, but she also knows that saying no will please her Lord.

- Can you imagine what it would have been like if Mary had acquiesced to her sister's pressure, and instead went back into the kitchen to help?
- Luke's Gospel would have read quite differently. You would've had Jesus, God incarnate, sitting all by Himself on their Ikea in the family room.
- I'll take it a step further; if Mary did cave in and do this, she'd have done so grudgingly, and she would've been as angry as Martha-at Martha.

- Question; I wonder how many problems in our lives could be, and even would be avoided if we like Mary had the time sitting at the feet of Jesus.
- I wonder how many marriage problems, financial problems, and even church problems we would actually have, or not have, if we did this first.
- Do you realize that this would have never even have been a problem in the first place, if both Mary and Martha were sitting at the feet of Jesus?

- Then wouldn't it stand to reason that the source of many of the problems in my life is that I'm too much like Martha, and not much like Mary?
- So now the question is; how do I be a Mary? I think the answer is found in, of all places, the letter to the church of Ephesus in Revelation two.
- You'll forgive me for saying it this way but this Ephesian church must've been filled with plenty of Martha's, and probably had only a few Mary's.

- The reason I say that is because Jesus commends them for their good deeds, and hard work, which means they must have had good grines!
- The problem for these Martha's is that Jesus rebukes this first church, like Martha, because they too had **"left"** not "lost," **their first love.**
- OK, so what does Martha do now? Jesus then gives them a "three-fold," "how," so that they can stop being a Martha, and start being a Mary.

- Jesus basically gives to them what's been often referred to as the three R's, and they are given in this order; repent, return, and repeat.
- In other words, repent by doing a 180 out of Martha's kitchen, and return to the Ikea, and repeat that which had first worked with your first love.
- I'll bring it to a close with some final thoughts related to this. First, there's really only one thing we can give to God that He doesn't already have!

- Think this through with me; God Who's "all" knowing, "all" powerful, and "all" present, may not have "all," because He still doesn't have all of me.
- I can't help but imagine how Jesus must have felt when Mary chose to drop everything, and leave Martha's kitchen so she could be with Him.
- As a father, I would much rather have all three of my children spending time with me, instead of taking that time and giving something to me.

Damian Kyle of Calvary Chapel Modesto tells a story about H.A. Ironside, which I think says it all. Harry Ironside shares about knowing a man who had suffered the death of his wife leaving him alone with their only daughter who was the joy of his life. This was long ago, and well before the time of Television when families actually sat together and talked together. As the story goes, it was during the winter with Christmas fast approaching as the autumn season had quickly passed by giving way to the busy-ness of the holiday. On one particular evening, the daughter politely excused herself after dinner leaving her father, only to disappear to her room for the night. This repeated itself night after night, until Christmas morning when she came running down the stairs with a nicely wrapped present to give to her father. He opens the gift and finds a pair of hand knitted slippers that his beloved daughter had spent all those nights making for him. The father graciously thanked her for the slippers, but then kindly speaks to her saying how he would have much rather had her with him all of those lonely evenings, than even ten thousand of these slippers.

- Perhaps the Holy Spirit deemed it necessary to include Mary and Martha's account for such a time as this. God knows us, and the Martha in us.
- God knows that all of us would desperately need a quiet Mary heart, in a busy Martha world, vis-a-vis the Mary solution to our Martha problem.
- It's for this reason and during this season, that now, more than ever, we need to have a Mary Christmas, and not a Martha Christmas, agreed?